GHOST RIDER

JOHNNY BLAZE IS CURSED, DOOMED TO LIVE LIFE AS THE GHOST RIDER, A BRUTAL SPIRIT THAT EXISTS ONLY TO METE OUT VENGEANCE AGAINST EVILDOERS. AFTER YEARS SPENT BEING A PAWN OF HELL, BLAZE HAS RECENTLY LEARNED THAT THE GHOST RIDER IS ACTUALLY A WEAPON OF HEAVEN, BONDED TO HIM BY THE RENEGADE ANGEL ZADKIEL. AT LONG LAST, BLAZE KNOWS EXACTLY WHO'S RESPONSIBLE FOR RUINING HIS LIFE. BUT THE ONLY QUESTION IS, HOW DOES HE GET REVENGE ON AN ANGEL?

RECENTLY BLAZE'S LONG LOST BROTHER AND FORMER GHOST RIDER DANNY KETCH RE-APPEARED, NOW IN THE SERVICE OF ZADKIEL. WITH A MOTLEY CREW OF VILLAINS IN TOW, INCLUDING THE VAMPIRE BLACKOUT, KETCH HAS LAUNCHED AN ATTACK ON A REMOTE TENNESSEE SHACK OCCUPIED BY CARETAKER, LONGTIME MENTOR TO THE GHOST RIDERS. MEANWHILE, JOHNNY BLAZE IS ALSO IN THE AREA, AND HAS JUST CROSSED PATHS WITH A RATHER INTERESTING NUN.

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THREE MONTHS AGO.
KANSAS.
THE SACRED HEART CONVENT FOR THE SISTERS OF THE HOLY SEPULCHER.
KII-YAAHH!
I CAN'T HEAR YOU, LADIES! YOU'RE AS QUIET AS A BUNCH OF PROTESTANTS!
WE MAY BE OF THE LORD'S FLOCK, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN WE HAVE TO BE MEEK AS LAMBS, NOW DOES IT?
THE DEVIL AND HIS MINIONS ARE EVERYWHERE, AND WE MUST BE PREPARED TO DEFEND OURSELVES! AM I RIGHT, SISTERS?
YES, MOTHER SUPERIOR!
AGAIN!
AND "KI-YAAHH" LIKE YOU MEAN IT THIS TIME!

THE PRESENT.
TENNESSEE. THE GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS.
PLEASE, IN THE NAME OF GOD, WON'T YOU HELP ME?
ALREADY TOLD YA, LADY, I GOT PROBLEMS OF MY OWN.
GO SQUIRT YA OUT A PRAYER TO SAINT WHO-GIVES-A-DAMN.
BUT PLEASE, I'M JUST TRYING TO FIND MY GRANDFATHER. I JUST NEED--
HEY!
WHO THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE, SISTER!
YOU BROKE MY WINDOW! AND IF YOU CAN'T PAY FOR IT, I'M GONNA TAKE IT OUTTA YOUR HIDE!
HEY, SIMMER DOWN, CHIEF. TAKE YOUR PAWS OFF THE LADY.
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, PAL! OR BETTER YET, WHY DON'T YOU HOP ON YOUR LITTLE CROTCH ROCKET THERE AND PISS THE HELL OFF!

ME AND THIS LITTLE NUN GOT BUSINESS TO--
WHACK
GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN!
KRAK
ALL I NEED IS A RIDE TO THE CEMETERY WHERE MY GRANDFATHER IS CARETAKER! IS THAT TOO MUCH TO ASK?!
SMACK
UUHHHH...
WAIT A SECOND, DID YOU SAY...
CARETAKER?

THE FORMER THINGS PART TWO
REQUIEM FOR A CARETAKER
JASON AARON WRITER
TAN ENG HUAT ARTIST
JOSE VILLARRUBIA COLOR ART
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA LETTERER
MARKO DJURDJEVIC COVER ARTIST
DANIEL KETCHUM EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EXEC. EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER
BETTER HOLD ONTO ME TIGHT. ROAD'S ROUGH.
BUT I... I DON'T I'VE NEVER BEEN THIS CLOSE TO A...
I'M OKAY, JUST DRIVE.
AND PLEASE... HURRY.

OH GOD... I'M TOO LATE!
I'M TOO LATE! THEY'VE KILLED HIM!
MAYBE NOT...
OH MY GOD!
HOWDY, SARA. I'M YOUR GRANDFATHER.
THANKS FOR COMING.

THE NUNS, THEY TOLD ME I WAS AN ORPHAN. THEY SAID I HAD NO FAMILY LEFT AT ALL.
THAT WAS FOR YOUR PROTECTION. I'D HOPED THAT YOU COULD GROW UP FREE OF THIS LIFE. THAT I'D NEVER HAVE TO CALL ON YOU.
YOU...YOU CALLED ME IN MY DREAMS, DIDN'T YOU?
I'M SORRY, I SHOULD'VE GOTTEN HERE SOONER, I...
NO, I DIDN'T CALL YOU HERE TO SAVE ME, SARA. AIN'T NO HOPE OF THAT.
I CALLED YOU HERE 'CAUSE YOU'RE THE LAST OF MY BLOODLINE. AND OUR FAMILY'S WORK ON THIS HERE EARTH AIN'T QUITE FINISHED YET.
YOU CALL ME TOO, OLD-TIMER?
NO, BLAZE, BUT I FIGURED YOU'D BE ALONG SOONER OR LATER.
TOOK QUITE A WHILE TO TRACK YOU DOWN. RECKON YOU KNOW WHY I'M HERE. ZARATHOS, NOBLE KALE, THE MEDALLION OF POWER, ZADKIEL...
I WANNA KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE GHOST RIDER ONCE AND FOR ALL.
WE AIN'T GOT TIME TO GET INTO ALL THAT RIGHT NOW.
LET'S MAKE TIME.
FINE. YOU WANT ANSWERS? THERE'S A WHOLE STOREHOUSE OF THEM RIGHT OVER THERE.
HATE TO TELL YA, CARETAKER, BUT YOUR STOREHOUSE HAS GONE UP IN FLAMES.
NO, NOT IN THE SHACK, MORON...

IT'S ALL HERE, BLAZE.
THE ANSWER TO EVERY QUESTION YOU'VE EVER HAD ABOUT THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE...IT'S ALL RIGHT BENEATH OUR FEET.
ALL YOU'VE GOT TO DO IS FIGHT FOR IT.
FIGHT WHO? WHO DID THIS? ZADKIEL'S MEN?
I COULD TELL YA...BUT YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE ME.
JUST TELL ME HOW TO GET TO THESE TUNNELS.
I CAN HELP WITH THAT.

WHAM
HIYA, BLAZE. REMEMBER ME?
BLACKOUT.

HEY THERE, FOLKS.
A NUN, HUH?
WOW. VIRGIN BLOOD. THAT'S HARD TO COME BY THESE DAYS.
DON'T GO NOWHERE, CUPCAKE. OL' BLACKOUT'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
MOTHER OF GOD...
LISTEN TO ME, SARA. YOU'VE GOT TO GET DOWN IN THOSE TUNNELS! YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THEM BEFORE THEY DESTROY EVERYTHING THAT'S THERE! EVERYTHING I'VE WORKED TO PRESERVE!
NO, WE'VE GOT TO GET YOU TO A HOSPITAL. WE'VE GOT TO--
FORGET ABOUT ME, GIRL. MY TIME HAS PASSED. YOU HAVE TO CARRY ON.
YOU HAVE TO BE THE CARETAKER NOW.

JUST GET DOWN ■ THOSE CAVES AND THEN YOU'LL UNDERSTAND WHAT-ALL'S AT STAKE HERE.
BUT I DON'T--
GO, FOR THE LOVE OF GOD!
I'M SORRY, SARA. THIS WAS NEVER SUPPOSED TO ■ YOUR BURDEN.
SO SORRY...

OH NO.
OH GRANDFATHER, I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SUPPOSED TO--
UUT

AAAAHHHH!!!
FUMP
BLAAARRRGHH!
OH LORD, HELP ME.

MOMENTS LATER...
VRROOOOOM
DAMN YOU, CARETAKER. THIS IS HOPELESS.
SSKKREEEEEEE
DANNY?
TIBET
DANNY!

CAME HERE FOR ANSWERS, LITTLE MISSIE, BUT SO FAR I HAVEN'T GOTTEN JACK SQUAT. CARETAKER SAID--
MY GRANDFATHER'S DEAD. I'M THE CARETAKER NOW. AND THIS PLACE IS NO USE TO US ANYMORE.
ALL THE ANSWERS YOU SEEK, BLAZE, ARE RIGHT IN HERE.
BUT IF YOU WANT TO HEAR THEM, WE'VE GOT TO GO NOW.
ALL I WANNA HEAR, LADY, IS HOW TO GET TO ZADKIEL.
THAT'S EASY ENOUGH...
JUST FOLLOW YOUR BROTHER.

I SERVED HEAVEN, YOU BASTARD! NOT YOU!
SOON ENOUGH, THERE WON'T BE A DIFFERENCE.

PLEASE... I'VE EARNED MY ETERNAL REWARD.
THAT YOU HAVE.

ALLOW ME TO GIVE IT TO YOU PERSONALLY.

AAARRRGGHHH!
WHACK

WWRRAAAGGH!
HACK
THUNK
AARR!

SCATTER THE SHARDS OF THIS WRETCH'S SOUL TO THE WINDS OF ETERNITY...

AND WHEREVER HIS SCREAMS MAY CARRY, LET THEM KNOW THE NAME OF ZADKIEL.
NEXT ISSUE:
THE LAST STAND OF THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE

GHOST WRITERS

Greetings and salutations, fellow Flamehead enthusiasts. Thanks for bringing us into your homes this month (unless you're reading this in the comic store, in which case, BUY IT ALREADY! This ain't a library, pal!). Thanks also to those of you reading this on the toilet right now, and may I say I sincerely hope this is the most fun you've had while sitting on the toilet all month. And thanks especially to those of you who blog about the series and chat it up online (especially everybody who posts at my message board, www.standardattrition.org, End Shameless Plug) and everybody who writes in each month. Speaking of which...

Yo,
You guys and girls at Ghost Rider are the best. This comic is the best thing to come out of New York since Yankee Stadium in the twenties. I thought the Ghost Writers in issue 26 were great. Alex, Cooper, Vinny, Sean, Mike and Carlos, thank you for being a fan of Ghostie like me. I really enjoyed the letters page, and the Orb and Caretaker. I didn't know the other guys but sick anyway. Issue 26 wasn't as great as the previous 25 comics, but I'm a fan of GR FOR LIFE. I got a couple wishes: KEEP JOHNNY BLAZE AS THE MAIN MAN, I have respect for Danny Ketch but Johnny's the man, Second, THIS COMIC RULES, Third YA'LL MORBID MINDS ARE REALLY SPECIAL, Fourth, INTRODUCE HOT WOMEN FOR JOHNNY SO MORE WOMEN WILL READ, Fifth, THIS COMIC RULES Sixth, CHOPPERS ARE KING, Seventh, GOD BLESS JOHNNY BLAZE, GHOST RIDER AND EVERYONE OF YOU WHO BROUGHT JOHNNY BACK AND GAVE ME AND MY GIRLFRIEND FUN TIMES READING GR, Eighth, LONG LIVE JOHNNY BLAZE.

Easy Eric
U.S.A.

Glad you enjoyed seeing the Orb and Caretaker, Eric. Here are a few notes on those guys and the other villains who popped up last issue, for those of you in the dark:

The Orb first appeared in 1973's MARVEL TEAM-UP #15. Initially he was just a disfigured motorcycle stuntman wearing a giant eyeball helmet that could shoot ray beams. But I wanted a guy who really did have a giant eyeball for a head, thus "the all-new Orb" was born. So how did he get a giant eyeball for a head anyway? That's a story for another day perhaps.

Death Ninja first appeared as a normal everyday ninja in 1990's GHOST RIDER #3, where he was stabbed with his own sword by the Danny Ketch Ghost Rider. Thirty-one issues later the same ninja returned, now as an undead zombie serving one of GR's enemies, Centurious, but really he was just hoping that GR would kill him and finally put the poor rotting bastard out of his misery.

Doghead is part man, part dog, and all bad ass, and was created by the demon Blackheart in GHOST RIDER #89.

Blackout, the albino vampire, has crossed paths with Danny Ketch many times, beginning with GHOST RIDER #3. Most notably, he once ripped Ketch's throat out and murdered Ketch's comatose sister.

Caretaker was the long-time mentor for Ketch, first appearing in GHOST RIDER #28, and popping up several times afterwards, sometimes offering cryptic bits of information on the history of the Spirits of Vengeance, sometimes just hitting people in the face with a shovel.

Let me just say I was blown away by Ghost Rider #26. Finally some of the classic rogues have returned, as had Caretaker and Danny Ketch. I'll be honest, when this new Ghost Rider series started I was nervous that the previous series would be ignored, but let me say as soon as the Orb and Death Ninja walked into Caretaker's museum I was more then thrilled to see everything that occurred previously was still canon.

This was a "Where's Waldo" of Ghost Rider history. The soul crystal, journals by Pastor Kale, the different bikes (although the one on the left is that supposed to be the bike used by Vengeance or a nod to the movie?) Please tell me you have not killed off Caretaker, Death Ninja, and Doghead (and if not give the latter a better name) so much potential in these characters. I hope Danny will not stay on the "dark side" in service of Zadkiel, to me he was the Ghost Rider and it was his character that got me into comics. I don't mind if he shares the spotlight with Blaze and from previews of upcoming issues, and the mini-series it looks like he still has his powers. I hope Danny has ulterior motives for doing what he's doing, as I find his actions more in line with the demeanor of Vengeance. By the way when is he popping up?

So when are we finally going to meet Zadkiel? He's been sitting on the sidelines unseen for too long. Also since we have the return of some villains/supporting characters when can we expect to see the return of Jennifer Kale, Lilith, Zarathos, Skinner, and my all-time favorite Ghost Rider villain Centurious? So until you cop out by making Caretaker a Skrull, keep up the great work.

Jason Foldes

Good job spotting some of those relics of Ghost Rider history in Caretaker's shack, Jason. Yes, all of those bikes you see were once ridden by Vengeance, who's another former Spirit of Vengeance, for those who don't know. Other bits of GR history seen in that shack include the Medallion of Power, the golden chains that bound the Son of Satan when he first appeared way back in GHOST RIDER #2 and the hat and gun belt worn by Carter Slade, the Phantom Rider of the wild west, as well as references to that short-lived super-team The Champions and to the Legion of Monsters from MARVEL PREMIERE #28, as well as teases of stories to come.

No plans yet for any of the characters you mention, Jason, but obviously this issue you did get your first look at Zadkiel in all his brutal, black-winged glory. Hope you like.

Hi Ghost Writer,

My name is John McCaul. I'm from Ireland but now live in America. I've been reading this series from issue one and I'm glad I stuck with it. #26 is the best comic I've read so far. I think the Orb looks really cool. I had to draw a picture of him with his "all-new repulsor ray." Keep up the good work and please print my letter

John McCaul
Tennessee

Wicked, John. Anybody who takes the time to draw the all-new Orb most certainly has a place in this letters column.

So with issue #27 now in the bag, that means we're all set to begin what will undoubtedly come to be known as the biggest arc in GHOST RIDER history. It's called "The Last Stand of the Spirits of Vengeance," and trust me, you're gonna want to see this one. Not only does it have the long-awaited epic throwdown between Blaze and Ketch, Ghost Rider vs. Ghost Rider, but there's also a big revelation coming about the nature of the Spirit of Vengeance, and oh yeah, the battle that will decide the fate of heaven. See you there.

Jason Aaron
August 2008

"Not a hard man to track. Leaves dead men wherever he goes."

GHOST RIDER VS GHOST RIDER

PAUL ACERIOS
PRODUCTION

DANIEL KETCHUM
EDITOR

JOE QUESADA
CHIEF

DAN BUCKLEY
PUBLISHER

MARVEL KNIGHTS C/O MARVEL COMICS
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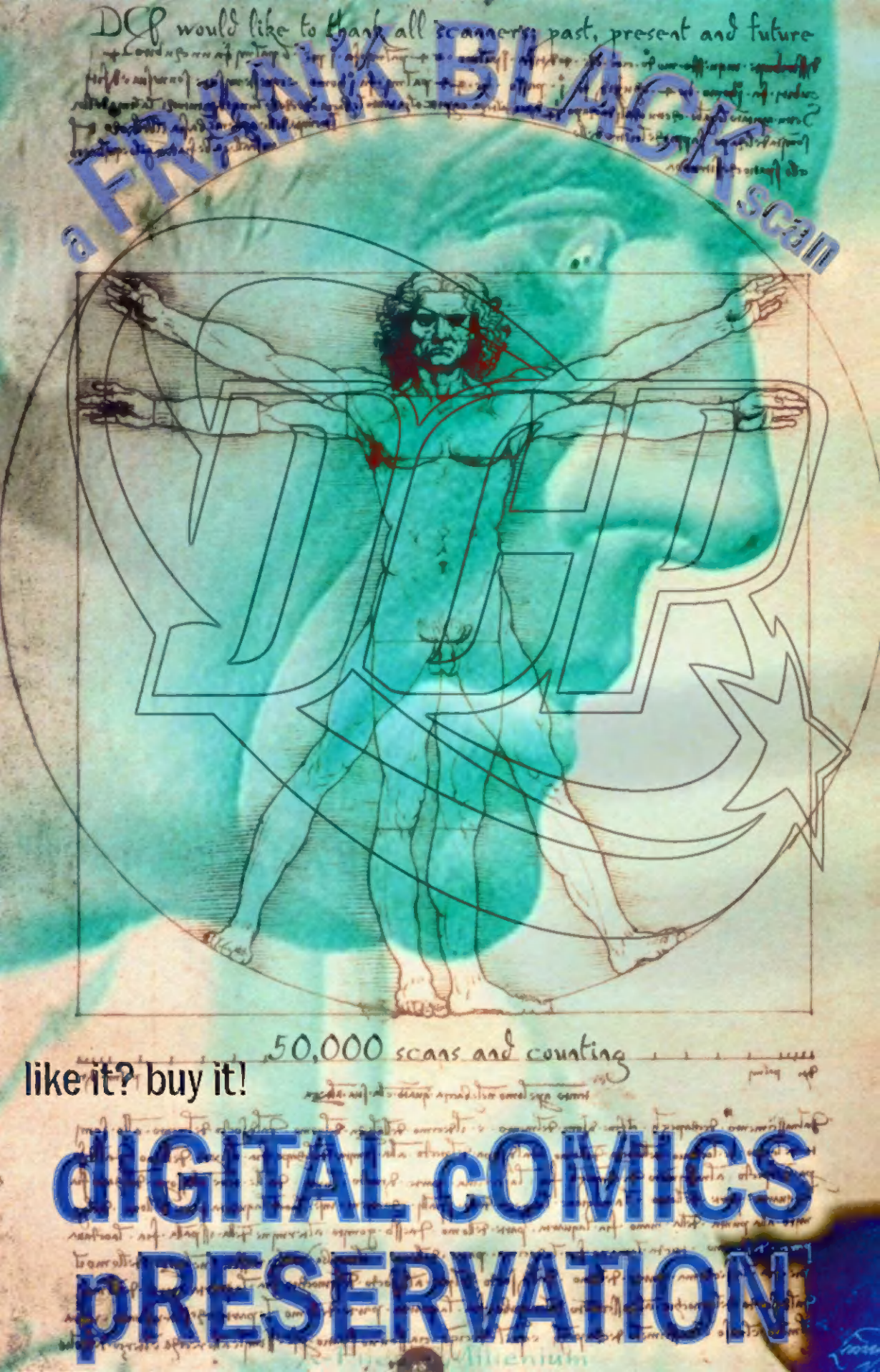
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